Untimely Repentance.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the Right Honourable

Lord PETRE

IN HIS

CHAPPEL

AT

Ingatestone-Hall,

ON

Passion Sunday,

April the 1st, 1688.

By *Richard Lewison* P. of the Society of Jesus.

Permissu Superiorum. J:

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St. *John chap.* 8. *ver.* 46.

Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato ?
Who of you ſhall accuſe me of ſin ?

THE Stubborn and Ungrateful *Jew*, whom all the Favours and Miracles of Heaven could never endear unto his God, even after his prodigious deliverance from *Egyptian* Slavery, and drowning of his Enemies in the Red Sea, ſtill murmurs againſt his Leaders, and ſtill turns Idolater to his Maker. And does his Patient God forbear? Does he extend his Mercies? Strange Patience! unheard of Clemency! He ſends his only begotten Son into the World, to guide, inſtruct, and give the knowledge of Salvation to his People, thinking they would reſpect him, embrace his Doctrine, obey his Commands, follow his Counſels, and imitate his Vertues. *Verebuntur Filium meum. They will reverence my Son.* St. *Matth.*

Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut filium ſuum unigenitum daret, St. Jo. cap. 3, v. 16.

chap. 21. *v.* 37. In vain my God in vain. He derides his Innocency, he ſcoffs at his Sanctity, he ſcorns his Vertue, perſecutes his Juſtice, condemns his Doctrine as erroneous, and obſtinately declares he will not follow it. *Recede à nobis, ſcientiam viarum tuarum nolumus. Depart from us, we will not the knowledge of thy ways, Job chap.* 21. *v.* 14. Though each Paragraph of the Law ſtile him Holy, all the Prophets celebrate him as a Juſt Man, all the antient Figures repreſent him innocent, though the Angel proclaim him Saviour of the world, though the Eternal God name him the Beloved of his Heart, tho' the People reverence him as a Prophet, *Hic eſt Jeſus Propheta. This is Jeſus the Prophet*, St. *Matth. chap.* 21. *v.* 11. and declare he had done all things well, tho' the Devils adore him as Son of God, in fine, tho' convinced by all the Oracles of Scripture, and his own Broad Seal of Miracles, that he is the true *Meſſias* and Saviour of the World, yet he will not receive him. *Nolumus hunc regnare ſuper nos. We will not have this Man reign over us*, St. *Luke chap.* 19. *v.* 15. So little impreſſion can the Preaching, Example, and Miracles of an Incarnate Deity work upon his Stony Heart. But what? ſhall his Stubborneſs conquer the Almighty, and Impiety baniſh Vertue in ſpight of Heaven? No. The God of Innocency, the Author of Sanctity, Divine Truth, and great Champion of Vertue, Chriſt Jeſus, makes a ſolemn Challenge to day, in the face of *Jeruſalem*, to his implacable Enemies the High Prieſts, Scribes, and Phariſees, in vindication of the Innocency of his Life, the Sanctity of his Manners, and Infallibility of his Heavenly Doctrine. Secure then of his own Innocency, and full of Godlike Majeſty, he aſſaults them with a *Quis ex vobis*, &c. *Who of you ſhall accuſe me of ſin*? He dares them to ſhew wherein he has offended. Tell me, have I ſinned againſt my God or my Neighbour? Have I not obſerved the great Commandements towards them both,

Love

Love thy God above all things, and thy neighbour as thy ſelf? Tell me in what have I tranſgreſſed? Have I ever violated the leaſt *Iota*, the leaſt title of the Law Divine, or Human? I have Preached in your Synagogues, I have ſpoke openly; examin my Doctrine, if it be not coherent with the Law and Prophets, if it be not Divine, if it be not from God. I have taught daily in the Temple, in your hearing, ſhew me a word that I have not confirmed by the brighteſt evidence of irrefragable Miracles. *Quis ex vobis? Who of you ſhall accuſe me of ſin?* Can your *Cæſars?* Can your *Herods?* Have I not punctually obey'd their Orders? Have I not paid them Tribute with all exactneſs? Have I not given ſtrict command to all my Followers, next unto God to give *Cæſar* his due? *Quis ex vobis?* &c. *Who of you?* &c. Can your High Prieſts? Have I not commanded Reſpect and Obedience to the Chair of *Moſes?* Can the Sinner or Publican? Have I not been zealous for his Eternal Salvation? Did I not daily invite him to Repentance, offer him Pardon, and promiſe him eternal Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven? Ask *Matthew* the Publican, demand of *Magdalen* the Sinner, put the query to *Simon* and *Zacheus. Quis ex vobis?* Can the Married? I have honoured their ſtate with my Preſence, and confirmed it by Miracle. Can the Widdows? I have ſupplied their wants by my Prophets, commanded them to be honoured by my Apoſtles, and my ſelf have raiſed their dead to comfort them in Afflictions. Ask the Widdow Woman of *Sarepta*, go to the Gates of *Naum*, and you will hear and ſee the cleareſt demonſtrations. Can the Virgin? I have equalled her condition to the ſublime degree of Angels. Can your Children? They were the boſom darlings of my Heart, and I have entailed Heaven upon them for their Inheritance. *Sinite parvulos venire ad me. Suffer the little Children to come unto me*, St. *Math. chap.* 19. *v.* 14. Can the Hungry Multitude? I fed them in the Deſart by Prodigies.

Prodigies. Can the Sick, Impriſoned, Lame, Leprous, Paralytick, or Poſſeſſed? Have I not viſited them, cured their Infirmities, caſt out Devils? What more? Of my Deeds the Dumb ſpeak, the Blind ſee them, the Deaf hear 'em, and the Dead can give you Intelligence of them. *Quis ex vobis*, &c. *Who of you ſhall accuſe me of ſin*? In fine, he lays open the truth ſo clear before their eyes, that they could have no excuſe for not embracing it. *Si non veniſſem, & locutus eis fuiſſem, peccatum non haberent: nunc autem excuſationem non habent. If I had not come, and ſpoken to them, they ſhould not have ſin, but now they have no excuſe for their ſin*, St. *John chap.* 15. *v.* 22. And then demands. *Si veritatem dico vobis, quare non creditis mihi? If I ſay the truth why do you not believe me*? St. *John chap.* 8. *v.* 47. But what return? The People indeed, raviſhed with the reſplendent truth of his Heavenly Doctrine, applaud him with a *Nunquam ſic locutus eſt homo. Never did man ſpeak as this Man*, St. *John chap.* 7. *v.* 47. yet the proud and haughty Phariſee, having nothing but meer Negatives to oppoſe, impudently Blaſphemes, *Nos ſcimus quia hic homo peccator eſt. We know that this man is a ſinner*, St. *John* 9. 24. and conſequently his Doctrine cannot be true, which filling the *Jews* with Envy, they take up Stones like unto their Hearts to throw at him. *Tulerunt ergo lapides ut jacerent in eum. They took Stones therefore to caſt at him*, St. *John chap.* 8. *v.* 59; call a Council and Condemn the Innocent, *Reus eſt mortis. He is guilty of death*, St. *Math.* 26. *chap. v.* 66.

Ch. Aud. I will not waſt my Time, nor your devout Attention, in accuſing the ſtubborn *Jew* of Sin, for rejecting the Divine call of his *Meſſias*; I leave it to that dreadful day, when he ſhall ſee him whom he Crucified coming in the Clouds with Majeſtie. There is a Chriſtian *Jew*, I mean the obſtinate Sinner, (for ſo he is, and ſo I call him) whom I accuſe,

First,

First, of a horrible Sin, in slighting the Inspirations and Graces of Almighty God, that daily invite him to Repentance.

Secondly, I will demonstrate the evident danger he puts the Eternal Salvation of his Soul in, by deferring his Conversion to the last.

Dear Jesus, I beseech you by that burning Zeal with which you sought the Salvation of the *Jews*, enlighten my Understanding, inflame my Will, and influence my Words with such Force and Energy, that piercing into the hearts of my Auditory, I may awake them out of that dangerous and soul-killing Lethargy too too many sleep in; by your bitter death and passion grant, that in the most terrible hour of death, on which depends the happiness or misery of Eternity, the Enemy of Souls may never insult over any one here, with a *Prævalui adversus eum. I have got the Victory, Psal.* 12. *v.* 5. I humbly beg it by the Intercession of your Virgin Mother, whom I salute with the Angel. *Ave Maria,* &c.

First Part.

IF I should accuse any here of Imprudence in their temporal Concernes, I were justly to be condemned of a rash Imputation: You are all wise. For who of you has not the end of his employment lively fixt before his Eyes? Who provides not all necessary means? Who delays in the speedy execution of them? Who embraces not all opportunities of obtaining it? Each step you take advances towards it. All your Study and Labours, your Care and Industry, your Thoughts in private, your Discourses in publick, your Conferences with Friends, your Vows in the day, your Wakings in the night, meet here as in their beloved Center. After this each motion of your Heart breaths, each aspiration of your Soul mounts to this as to its sphere of rest. This raises the Scholar to

a Benefice, brings the Lawyer to the Bar, enriches the Merchant with Treasures, advances the Courtier to the favour of his Prince, and crowns the Souldier with Laurels. Hence I accuse my Christian *Jew*, my obstinate Sinner. Why not so much diligence in the main point, in the most important affair, in that *unum necessarium* the eternal welfare of thy Soul? Why does not the great Maxime of Salvation, taught thee by the God of truth, *Quid prodest*, &c. *What doth it profit a Man, if he gain the whole world and sustain the damage of his Soul*, take up thy time but half as much, and dwell as near thy heart. *Obstupescite Cœli super hoc & portæ ejus desolamini vehementer. Be astonied O heavens upon this, and O gates thereof be ye desolate exceedingly.* He knows that at the same time he sins, he looses the friendship of God, his right to Heaven, and becomes a miserable Slave to Hell. And yet, because Heaven does not consume him with Fire, the Earth does not open and swallow him alive, becaus like a *Baltazar*, he is not summon'd from the midst of his Pleasures, to give a strict account at the severe Tribunal of Divine Justice, he boasts with the Wicked. *Peccavi, & quid mihi accidit triste. I have sinned and what sorrowful thing hath befallen me, Eccl. chap. 5. v. 4.* If you tell him with the Wise Man, that delays are dangerous, and sound in his Ear, *Ne differas de die in diem*, &c. *Slack not to be converted to our Lord, and defer not from day to day. For his Wrath shall come suddenly, and in the time of Vengeance he will destroy thee, Ibid v. 8, 9.* Send him a *Moses* to know when he shall pray for him, and free him from the vexing Plagues of Sin, *appoint me when I shall pray for thee, Exod. chap. 8. v. 9.* And with the senseless *Pharao* he answers. *To morrow.* Let a Jesus inculcate a thousand *Videte's, watch, pray, you know not when the time is, you know neither the day nor the hour*, he answers, he is sensible enough of his condition, and would not for a thousand Worlds die in the state he lives in, and is resolved

Jer. ch. 11. v. 12.

to

to repent when he comes to die; for to be saved it is not so absolutely necessary to live a holy Life, as to dye a holy Death; and so eludes all the remorses of his guilty and tortured Conscience, puts off all the Graces and Divine Inspirations of God, that daily invite him to Repentance, with the unhappy *Felix* to St. *Paul*, *Quod nunc attinet*, &c. *For this time go thy way: but in time convenient I will send for thee*, *Acts chap.* 24. *v.* 25. He will make use of them another time, he will hear them when he is more at leisure, when he grows old he will lay all other concerns aside, and attend wholly to the Salvation of his Soul. Is not this a Miracle sufficient to astonish Heaven and Earth? That a Man of reason, a Man that pretends to Christianity, should have so little sense of his Eternal Happiness, as to live as they did who are now damned, to Feast, Drink, Sleep, and be Merry, as if he had not one Foot upon the very brink of Hell, but were on the Wings of a Seraphim, in his flight to the Glory of Paradise; that he should have so little feeling of his only Soul, *Unicam meam*, as with the Epicure to think it to be only like Salt unto his Body, to keep it from stinking? Pray tell me, what was the ruin of *Pharao* and the whole Kingdom of *Egypt*? Was it not his stubborness to the Calls of Heaven? Hear the most eloquent St. *Ambrose*. *Appoint me when*, says the God-like *Moses*, and senseless *Pharao* answers, *To morrow: whereas press'd by so great necessity he ought to desire him to pray now, and not defer it, he answers to morrow. But this delay cost the lazy and negligent Prince no less than the ruin and destruction of Egypt.* What was the destruction of the famous *Jerusalem*? Was it not because she was deaf to all the invitations of her God? Neither the Promises of *Isaiah*, nor Prayers of *Jeremiah*, nor Threats of *Joel*, nor so many Exhortations, Graces and Miracles of the Son of God himself could awake her. Our Blessed Saviour expresses the cause in a Flood of compassionate Tears. *Eò quòd non cognoveris tempus*

Cum deberet in tantâ positus necessitate rogare ut jam oraret nec differret, respondit crastinâ die, ctiosus & negligens moræ pœnam Egypti soluturus exitio.

tempus visitationis tuæ. Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation, St. *Luke chap.* 19. *v.* 44. Because she did not hearken when called, repent when invited.

For my part were I to write the cause of their Damnation upon the Forehead of the Damned, I would use no other Inscription then *Eò quòd non cognoverint tempus,* &c. *Because they did not know the time of their visitation.* All these suffer, and shall suffer in Hell for Eternity, because they mispent their time in this World, and did not make use of Divine Grace when offered. There is not one of these but intended to save his Soul, as much as you do. But alas! They deferred their Conversion too long, then went to buy the Oyl of Mercy when she had shut the Gates against them. *Eò quòd non cognoverint tempus,* &c. *Because they did not know the time of their Visitation.* Do you not? O Angel, that keepest the keys of *Death and Hell, Claves mortis & Inferni, Apocal. chap.* 1. *v.* 18. open I beseech you those dark Abysses where all unfortunate Souls must eternally dwell; that with the Devout St. *Bernard,* we may descend in Contemplation to Hell whilst we live, never to come there when we are dead. Unhappy *Dives*! Who stript thee of thy Silks and Purple? What brought thee into this place of torments? What torments thee in these Flames? Oh! I often heard a *Væ nobis divitibus, Woe to you rich men,* St. Luke chap. 6. v. 24. *Quorum Deus venter est, quorum finis interitus? Whose God is their belly, whose end is destruction.* Yet I clad my self in the richest Silks and Purples, eat and drank of the most exquisite Meats and choicest Wines I could get, I made my Belly my God, and spent my Youth in Mirth and Riot, still intending to fast, cloath my self with Ashes and Sackloth, in my old age, and save my Soul at last. But O! That *ducunt in bonies dies suos & in puncto ad inferna descendunt. They lead their days in Wealth, and in a moment go down to Hell,* was my unfortunate *Exit.* I stopt my Ears when

Phil. ch. 3. v. 19

called

called by the merciful admonitions of my God, deferred my Pennance too long, and therefore hurried away by ſudden death, am buried, am buried in Hell. I ſee the once ſcorned Beggar in the boſom of delights, I beg of Father *Abraham*, not Oceans, nor Streams, but that the ulcerous *Lazarus* may only dip the tip of his Finger in Water to cool the unquenchable thirſt of my ſchorched Tongue, and can't obtain it. Alas! All the comfort I receive is a reproachful *Recordare fili*, &c. *Remember Son that thou didſt receive good things in thy life time*, &c. St. *Luke ch.* 16. *v.* 25. I omitted, when offered, to drink of thoſe Waters of Grace, which extinguiſh an eternal thirſt, and therefore, *Crucior in hâc flammâ. I am tormented in this flame.* O miſerable young man! What ſad Chance cut off thy bloomy days in their prime, and brought thee hither? It was a Non-correſpondence to the Admonitions of his Friends, Suggeſtions of his good Angel, and Graces of Almighty God, which ſo often with an *Adoleſcens tibi dico ſurge. Young man, I ſay to thee ariſe*, St. *Luke ch.* 7. *v.* 14. call'd upon him to forſake that lewd Company, fly thoſe occaſions of Sin, and ſave himſelf with *Lott* from the flames of *Sodom*. But he heard them not, he thought ſome liberty might be given to Youth, intending when the heat and fervour of that was over, to become a *Joſeph* in the victories of Chaſtity, ſo goes on, ſpends his ſtrength and eſtate too Prodigal-like, *vivendo luxurioſè*. But alas! before he could return to the all-pardoning embraces of his Heavenly Father, a burning Feaver enkindled by the damnable Flames of Luſt, poſts him unexpectedly into another World of the ſame temper, *Hell. For the luſtful flames of this life lead us down to the burning fire of that Furnace.* Poor unfortunate young Woman! How came you into theſe Shades of horror? She weeps; ſhame and Confuſion will not permit her to ſpeak. She often heard from her heavenly Spouſe a *Vides hanc mulierem? Do you ſee this Woman?*

Libidinoſum enim hujus vitæ incendium, ad fornacis illius incendium dusit. Iſidor. Peluſ. Epiſt. 533.

She followed *Magdalen* the Sinner, but neglected to imitate *Magdalen* the Penitent, till the time of Repentance was elapsed, and therefore she weeps, and shall weep eternally, but never hear a *remittuntur tibi peccata tua. Thy Sins are forgiven thee.* Unbelieving Soul! What shut thee out of Heaven, and condemned thee to an everlasting death? Want of true Faith. I often heard a secret voice in my Soul tell me, that there was but *one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism*, St. *Paul* to the *Ephes. chap.* 4. and consequently among so many Contradictory Religions, all could not be true ways to Salvation. I always thought that to be the true Church, which by clear Texts of Scriptures, Authority of general Councils, Sentences of Holy Fathers, and a never interrupted Succession of Supream Pastors, could prove its self to have the Marks of Christs true Church, as to be *One, Holy, Catholick* and *Apostolick*. I thought that infallibly must be the true Church of Christ, which notwithstanding all the Attempts and Persecutions of Schism, Heresie, and Hell, was yet visible, and could shew it had maintained its Doctrine in its Primitive Purity, and taught now the same that Christ and his Apostles taught. But whether I were a Member of this Church or no, I omitted (through too much love of the World, and desire of Liberty) to inquire, and therefore dying out of its Communion, out of which there is no Salvation, eternally perished.

Ergo dum lucem habetis, credite in lucem ut filii lucis sitis, St. Jo. ch. 12. v. 36.

Hodie si vocem ejus audieritis nolite obdurare corda vestra.

Thus it will happen to all, who refuse to answer when God calls. Therefore, *Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.* The unbelieving Soul, if he will be saved, must bottom himself on true Faith. *Ergo.* Therefore *if to day you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.* The obstinate Sinner if he will be saved, must answer when God calls. Did I say to day? Oh let it be this very moment, before you depart from the Chappel, before you go home, and it will be the beginning of your eternal happiness; and thus I conclude my first Point.

Second

Second Part.

THE moſt deluding Fallacy on which the obdurate Sinner builds the delay of his Converſion, is a preſumptive confidence in the Mercies of Almighty God, ſo much the more treacherous and deceitful, becauſe it carries an outward ſhew of Vertue. St. *Chryſoſtom* on the ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, takes him to task, and thus diſcourſes. *Dicis*, ſays he, *Alii mali fuerunt, & ſalvi facti ſunt, dabit & mihi ſpatium pœnitentiæ.* Others were bad and are ſaved; *David* was an Adulterer, *Zacheus* a Publican, *Saul* a Perſecuter, and *Magdalen* a Sinner, and he will give me time to repent. So they ſpeak who ſin with confidence, and, as *Tertullian* ſaid, are bad becauſe God is good. The Saint replies and asks. *An vere dabit ſpatium pœnitentiæ? Fortaſſe, inquis, dabit.* But will he really give you time to repent? Perchance, ſay you, he will. The Saint urges very home. *Dicis fortaſſe? memento quod de anima loqueris. Do you ſay perchance? Remember that you ſpeak of your Soul.* In a buſineſs of ſo great concern, then which no man has, or can have a greater, do you proceed with the uncertainty of a perchance? When with ſo much Facility you may put your ſelf almoſt in ſecurity of your Salvation? You never admit of theſe doubts or uncertainties in the meaneſt affairs of the World. Nay, is your Friend condemned by ſome unfortunate accident to the fatal ſtroak of death, do you not uſe all poſſible care, all imaginable means, do you not imploy all your intereſt and Forces, to repeal the Sentence, to obtain his pardon? Why then muſt only the buſineſs of your eternal Salvation be managed with the uncertainty of time, which is not in your power. *Fortaſſe dabit.* And how numerous are they to whom God has not given time to provide for the main concern, and yet theſe very men had continual-

continually in their Mouths. *Fortaſſe dabit. Perchance he will give us time to repent*; they ſpent their days in Feaſting, and lived pleaſantly. It's true, ſays St. *Auguſtin*, and I err if you do not find written in the Goſpel, with the Golden Characters of Light and Truth, that God promiſes *pardon to all Sinners that repent*: But though you had a hundred thouſand eyes, you will never find regiſtred by the Pen of God, in any page of the ſacred Volumes, that he has promiſed a Sinner *time to repent. Nemo ergo ſibi promittat quod Evangelium non promittit. Let no man therefore promiſe himſelf that which the Goſpel does not promiſe.* St. *Auguſtin*, De verbis Domine, Ser. 16.

But ſay what I will, my Chriſtian *Jew* is become a *Rabbi* in the Synagogue of the Obſtinate. He tells me with his confederates in *Iſaiah. Percuſſimus fœdus cum morte & cum Inferno fecimus pactum, Iſaiah* 28. 15. He has made a truce with Death, and ſtruck up a bargain with Hell. What? That Death ſhall not ſeize upon you unprovided? That it ſhall give you time by a perfect contrition and ſorrow for your Sins to reconcile your ſelf to Almighty God, to arm your ſelf with the rites of the Church for that dangerous paſſage, that your death ſhould be all mild, all pleaſant, all melodious and joyful, that happy, as old *Simeon*, you ſhall cloſe your Eyes with Jeſus in your Arms, and depart in peace, ſinging a *Nunc dimittis ſervum tuum Domine*, &c. *Now thou doſt diſmiſs, O Lord, thy Servant according to thy word in peace, becauſe mine eyes have ſeen thy Salvation*, St. Luke *ch.* 2? *And we have made a bargain with Hell.* That you ſhall be free from all temptations, that the Devils ſhall not moleſt you, that Hell ſhall not devour you? But you have cheated your ſelf, as all the Adverſaries of Vertue and Truth always do, either ignorantly, or willfully taking a Sentence, and not minding the Context. Had you read on, you had found a Salve to that damnable errour in the ſame place. *Et delebitur fœdus*

fœdus veſtrum cum morte, Iſaiah *the* 5. *ch.* 14. *v.* &c. *And your league with death ſhall be aboliſhed, and your covenant with Hell ſhall not ſtand.* But above all, methinks that terrible *Ego vado quæretis me & in peccato veſtro moriemini, St.* Joh. 8. *ch.* 21. *v. Igo, you ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall die in your ſin*; Threatned by our Bleſſed Saviour to the *Jews*, ſhould ſtrike a terror into the moſt obdurate Sinners. There will be then a time for certain, when you ſhall ſeek God and not find him, when you ſhall call upon him and not be heard. The darkneſs of approaching death will hide him from your ſight, and you that have not found him by the lights he gave you in your life, will certainly never find him in the ſhades of death. In a word, that Sinner ſeeks Chriſt, but finds him not, who repents too late, that is, lets Death ſurprize him in Sin, ſays Venerable *Bede*. Continue your favourable attention and I will prove it.

Hoc eſt Chriſtum male quærere in peccato ſuo mori, & in peccato ſuo morietur, qui in peccato ſuo permanet uſque ad mortem.

The lamentations of the Spouſe in the *Canticles*, becauſe ſhe could not find her beloved are certain, the cauſe uncertain. *Quæſivi in lectulo meo quem diligit anima mea, & non inveni*, Cant. ch. 3. *I have ſought in my little bed whom my Soul loveth, and have not found him.* To omit other the reaſon in my opinion, why ſhe could not find him, may be, becauſe ſhe only ſought him in the bed of Sickneſs, when the darkneſs of death grew thick upon her, becauſe the Sun of Juſtice ſeldom or never enlightens thoſe horrid ſhades with the rays of Mercy. That is, you that expect to find God merciful on your death-bed, will be deceived. In vain you expect the health of your Soul, among the mortal diſtempers of your Body. It is in vain to think to gain Eternity in a moment. It is in vain to cover your ſelf with the Aſhes of Pennance, when the Duſt of your Sepulchre is near. In vain do your eyes pour out ſcalding Tears, when a cold ſweat of Death runs down your Cheeks. Your ſighs are illtim'd for Pennance, when you groan for life. What force can Pennance have in ſuch

a weakneſs of Members? What fruits can ſhe produce, planted in the Aſhes of a Carcaſs. Vertues will not grow in a heart void of natural heat and ſtrength. Wo then to the Soul that only ſeeks her Spouſe on her Death-bed. And wo to thee, ſtubborn Sinner, that only beg'ſt mercy when thy gaſping Soul hangs upon thy dying lips.

Poteſt nobis extremi temporis Indulgentia ſubvenire, at periculoſiſſima eſt in ultimum diem promiſſa ſecuritas. Lib. de v. pæn.

I do not intend to condemn the Pennance of many in their laſt Agony; perchance by labouring in the laſt hour of the day, they may deſerve their penny and receive the reward of Glory. But I muſt tell you, that all the holy Fathers look upon it as infirm, preſumptive and to be ſuſpected. St. *Aug.* affirms it to be very unſure and of little value. We may be ſo fortunate as to find mercy at the laſt hour: *but it is a moſt dangerous ſecurity we promiſe our ſelves in the laſt day.* For it does not often happen that he that has lived a Fool all his life, becomes a Wiſe man at his death. And can there be a greater Fool than he who commits his eternal concerns to a dying life? Not a feeble but ſtrong Voice is requiſite to plead a buſineſs of that Importance; it demands a weeping Eye not a dying one; exacts a grieving Soul, not a dead body. Becauſe ſays St. *Aug.* Serm. 66. *de temp. Parum eſt peccatori pœnitere niſi pœnitentiam peregerit. It little avails a ſinner to repent, unleſs he perform his Pennance.* Becauſe as we eſteem not the Tree, but the Fruit, nor is the Plant commendable that renders no Fruit to the Gardiner, ſo Almighty God values not a fruitleſs Sorrow or barren Repentance. Our Saviour and St. *John* exclaim, *Facite fructus dignos pœnitentiæ. Yield fruits worthy of Pennance,* St. *Luke ch.* 3. *v.* 9. But in ſuch anguiſh of Soul, in ſuch pain of body, in a head full of other concerns, in a diſtracted mind, in a heart not only barren of good deeds, but holy thoughts, what Fruits can Pennance produce? And will you yet defer your Converſion? Do you know it? He that procraſtinates in an affair of that Importance, conteſts with his everlaſting ruin. Pennance is

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a traffick you may purchaſe a bleſſed Eternity with? But who is that ſlothful and unfortunate Servant that hid it under ground? It is you that differ your Converſion, and think to do Pennance in the end of your Life. You will be numbred among the fooliſh Virgins that repented too late, *&c.* therefore *Clauſa eſt Janua; neſcio vos.* The gate is ſhut; I know you not.

But you think to deceive God, and rob him of Paradiſe, as the good Thief did on the Croſs, reſerving for your laſt breath, a *Domine memento mei*, &c. *Lord remember me when you ſhall come into your Kingdom.* As if this were the form of a Sacrament that operates independently of the Merits of the Miniſter, and in vertue of this, you were to do preſently what you ſay, and Chriſt were ſuddenly to anſwer you with a *Hodie mecum eris in Paradiſo. This day thou ſhalt be with me in Paradiſe.* The Divine St. *Aug.* condemns you of a pernicious errour. *Ad emendanda crimina vox pœnitentis ſola non ſufficit, nam ad ſatisfactionem ingentium peccatorum non verba tantum ſed opera quæruntur.* Ser. 1. de pæn. *To the amendment of our Crimes the voice of the Penitent alone is not ſufficient, for to the ſatisfaction of great ſins, not words but works are required.* What? Are the inveterate ſins of your obſtinate Soul ſo many flames that can be blown out with a gentle ſigh? Are they Spots that can be waſht away with a Tear? Are they Wounds, are they Ulcers that can be cured with the Divine Inchantment of four Words. *Domine, Domine aperi nobis. Lord open the gate.* So that at your command Heaven Gates ſhall fly open, and your Soul be received in Triumph? *Ad ſatisfactionem*, &c. And if you are not able to ſatisfy for your ſins in that weak condition, how is it poſſible for you to overcome an army of Sins now in poſſeſſion of your Soul? How will you conquer thoſe Legions of Devils that lye encamped round about to defend it? Good God! Thoſe ſins that ſo many Preachers thundring the Judgments of the Almighty againſt thee, could not drive out! Thoſe ſins that the Sword of Juſtice hanging every moment over thy head, could not diſlodge! Thoſe ſins that the fear of Hell fire could not vanquiſh, ſhall they now be conquered by a feeble Pennance,

without Armes, without Forces, and as dead as thy dying Body? What ſhall I ſay but exclaim with the Divine St. *Auguſtin. Pœnitentia quæ a moriente tantum petitur, timeo ne & ipſa moriatur. That Pennance which a dying Man only begs to do, I am afraid it will die.* I fear ſhe will be defeated, I fear ſhe will die; and as the Body becomes a ſpoil to the Victories of Death, ſo ſhe will fall a Victim of Sin, and a Prey to the Devils. Therefore if you intend to become victorious in the laſt and terrible battel, why do you not quicken your Pennance with the vigour of Youth, arm it with the Weapons of Mortification, and curbing your unbridled Paſſions, ſtrengthen it with noble Reſolutions, and the powerful aſſiſtance of Chriſtian Vertues? Aſſure your ſelf a dying Age will never prove the fruitful Parent of a victorious Pennance. *Pœnitentia quæ a moriente tantum petitur,* &c.

You then, O holy Penitent, and moſt bright mirrour of Pennance, O holy *Magdalen*, teach my Auditory what time you obſerved to hear thoſe moſt comfortable words, *Remittuntur tibi peccata tua.* Perchance you expected your lips ſhould wither, before you fix'd thoſe chaſt kiſſes on the Feet of Jeſus. You waited perchance for death to break your Body, before you broke open your Box of Perfumes to annoint his Divine Feet. You ſtaid perchance for old age to rob you of thoſe charming Locks, before you offered them to your dear Lord, to inſnare him in your love. You demurred perchance till your ſins left you, that you might run to God. *Ut cognovit.* Chriſtian Auditory. *Ut cognovit.* As ſoon as ever ſhe underſtood that her Heavenly Phyſitian was at hand, preſently, without any delay, changing her ſinful boldneſs into a fruitful confidence, ſhe entred where he was, and proſtrate at his Divine Feet, the Pillars of a *non plus ultra*, to her wicked life, pleaded her pardon with the ſilent groans of a contrite heart, and drown'd her ſins in a Sea of Tears. *Ut cognovit. As ſoon as ever ſhe knew.* Therefore, *Quærite Dominum dum inveniri poteſt. Seek the Lord whilſt he may be found.* Now, this day, this moment. When he calls you, when he offers you his Grace, when he expects your return.

Do

Nec ipſa ſe ad hoc reſervavit, ut in fine vitæ pœnitentiam ageret, ſed dum adhuc peccare poterat ſic Deo inſpirante voluit peccata dimittere, ut illam de Adulteriis ſuis, non neceſſitas ſubtraheret, ſed voluntas & ideo audire mervit, quod ei omnia dimiſſa ſunt peccata. S. Aug. ſer. 57. de Pœn.

Do not defer till the night of Death ſurpriſe you. *Venit nox quando nemo poteſt operari. The night comes when no man can labour.* It will then be too late. You'll ſeek your Saviour but not find him. *Et in peccato*, &c. *And then you'll die in your ſin.*

Another reaſon which renders thy repentance almoſt impoſſible, is thy cuſtom of ſinning, which once having got poſſeſſion of thy Soul, is hardly rooted out. Becauſe, ſays St. *Aug. Conſuetudo eſt quædam habituata natura. Cuſtom is a ſecond nature.* And *Seneca* anſwers thee, *That when thy Vices are become thy Manners, there is no place for a remedy. Tunc deſinit eſſe remedio locus, ubi quæ fuerint vitia mores fiunt.* You read a ſtrange example of this in the third Book of Kings, 13 *chap.* King *Jeroboam*, by his frequent Idolatry, was become harder to the voice of God then the Stones he adored. The Prophet *Semeia*, by Divine order, goes to him, and finds him ſtanding upon the Altar, but directs his Embaſſy to the Altar not to the King. *Altar, Altar.* St. *Chryſoſtom* aſtoniſh'd hereat, asks him. *Cum lapide verba facis?* O Man of God, what do you do? Do you think God has given the Marble ears to hear your voice? Is your Tongue an Inſtrument of ſteel, that can imprint upon it the Character of your words? Certainly upon this Altar you ſacrifice your Words to the Winds. Why do you not ſpeak to the King who willingly hears you? Every one will judge you a mad Man, to treat Stones as Men, and Men as Stones. Do you think the King will not give you audience? Much leſs will the Stones return you an anſwer. If the one will not hear what you ſay, do you believe the other will execute your Commands? If *Jeroboam* has not ears to hear you, much leſs has the Marble capacity to underſtand you. But it was not ſo. For the Prophet found more hardneſs in the ſtubborn heart of the obſtinate King, than in the ſenſeleſs Stone; and his voice which was not heard by the one was obey'd by the other, opening its Bowels, and delivering out the commanded Victim, in obedience to the ſame voice the ſtubborn King ſtopt his Ears to. *Etiam quando rex minus compos eſt ſenſuum quam lapis, & audivit lapis, ipſe lapis in ſciſſuras diffractus eſt, & victimam*

effudit, homo ille non audivit. St. Chryſ. In *proem.* in *Iſaiah.* This we ſee daily, and lament. How many Preachers by Sermons, Exhortations, and pious Diſcourſes, tell the obſtinate and habitual Sinner, the danger he is in by delaying his Converſion. They propoſe to him the patience of his God, his frequent invitations to repentance, his threats, his promiſes, his rewards, his puniſhments, nothing moves him. *Percuſſiſti eos & non doluerunt*, ſays *Jeremiah* of the obſtinate. *Thou haſt ſtricken them and they have not grieved, chap.* 5. In vain does Heaven puniſh here, in vain do you propoſe divine Benefits. *Ipſi fuerunt rebelles lumini.* They were rebellious to the Light, ſays *Job* of the ſame, *ch.* 54. A curſed habit of Sinning has rendred thy heart more hard than the very Stones.

The Divine St. *Aug.* has a gentile reflection upon three Dead, raiſed by our Bleſſed Saviour. The Prince of the Synagogues Daughter dies. The Heavenly Phyſitian only takes her by the hand, not ſo much to feel the motion of her Pulſe, as to give it; bids her riſe, and ſhe returns to Life. The Widdows Son of *Naim*, interpreted the City of Beauties, dies in the flower of his Youth, and Jeſus meets the diſconſolate Widdow at the City Gates, calls the young man with an *Adoleſcens tibi dico ſurge*, and in obedience to the command he ſtands up alive, and Jeſus dries up the Tears of the afflicted Mother with the joyful ſight of her raiſed Son. *Lazarus* dies and is buried, and Chriſt is troubled, ſighs for grief, breaks out into Tears, groans, and with a loud cry calls him, *Lazare, veni foras. Lazarus, come forth.* And thus he reſcues him from the Jaws of death, and brings him alive from the Sepulchre. But what ſort of death is this, my dear Jeſus, that will not give *Lazarus* the light of life, unleſs your all enlightening Eyes ſet in a Sea of grief? That will not open the Grave and give up her dead, unleſs you open your Sacred Mouth to groans? That will ſee you, Author of all Joy, full of all ſadneſs, before ſhe rejoice the Spectators with their raiſed Friend. Why was there not need of this in the others? Whence this novelty? St. *Aug.* anſwers the query. Becauſe in the young Perſons was expreſſed a Sin newly committed;

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not so much out of Malice as Frailty. But this signifies a habit of sinning. *Cum consuetudinis malæ quasi mole terrena premitur animus, quasi in Sepulchro jam putet. When the Soul is oppressed by a bad habit, as with a heap of Earth, it corrupts as it were in her Sepulcher.* And therefore the voice of our Saviour was sufficient alone to raise the First. But here *Fremuit in Spiritu, & rursus infremuit, & deinde magna voce exclamavit, Lazare veni foras. He groaned in Spirit, and groan'd again, and then he cry'd out with a great voice,* Lazarus *come forth.* To demonstrate how difficult a thing it is for a Sinner to be Converted, and do Pennance at the hour of his Death. It is a strange observation of St. *Jerome* upon the Epistle of St. *Paul*, where mention is made of the general Judgment. At the first sound of the Angelical Trumpet, which must summon all Men to the vale of *Josaphat*, the dead will presently arise and present themselves. But to the living which remain on earth, the voice of the Archangel will not be enough, the voice and command of God must be added. What means this? That it is easier to raise a dead man to life, than Convert an obstinate Sinner. This will sooner come from his Grave, than that will leave his wicked life. This will sooner awake from the sleep of death, than that will rise from the Lethargy of Sin. And God is sooner heard in Graves than in Towns and Cities.

But my obstinate Sinner still replies, that the mercies of God are above all his Works. That he will not the death of a Sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. That his Mercies have most of all triumphed in the hour of death. He has invited, even then, the worst of Sinners to pardon. *Manasses* after a wicked life, became a Penitent. He invited *Judas* with a kiss of Peace, and saved a Thief on the Cross. It's very true, but here lies an errour that has Peopled Hell. Are you sure, or do you only hope that he will invite you? *Vix dici potest*, says St. *Aug. quantos hæc inanis spei umbra deceperit. It can hardly be expressed how many this empty shadow of vain hope has deluded.* Serm. 100. de temp. This it was that ruined *Judas* and made him *dux eorum qui comprehende-*

henderunt Jſum. Captain of them that apprehended Jeſus. And whence ſo great boldneſs, ſuch hardneſs of heart in an Apoſtle, a worker of Miracles, who had lived three years in the School and Company of Chriſt? St. *Chryſoſtom* found the Origin and diſcovered it for the Inſtruction and Correction of the like to him. *Confidebat nimium in lenitate Magiſtri, quæ res illum magis confudit, & omni venia privavit. He confided too much in the Meekneſs of his Maſter, which did more confound him, and deprive him of all pardon.* The ſweet behaviour of Chriſt to him, which ought to have made him love him more dearly, rendred him odious and deſpicable. He never ſaw him hurt any one, but do good to all, and therefore he betray'd him, becauſe he did not fear him, but vainly confided in his Mercy. And tho' *Manaſſes* clos'd his wicked life with a penitent death; yet his graceleſs Son *Ammon* following the vicious ſteps of his Father died as he lived. Nor muſt you urge tha example of the good Thief. For in the day the Son of God died to redeem man, ſome extraordinary priviledge might be granted. But turn from the right hand to the left, it is a ſhort paſſage, and you will ſee, that tho' he was converted and ſaved, yet his Companion, and a thouſand of the ſtanders by, died as they lived. This then is an error the blind may ſee palmed on your ſelf, not upon God. For he proteſts by the mouth of the Wiſeman, *Prov.* 1. That he called, and you refuſed, you deſpiſed his Counſels, neglected his reprehenſions, and therefore he will laugh in your deſtruction, and ſcorn when tribulation and diſtreſs ſhall come upon you. *Then,* ſays he, *they ſhall invocate me, and I will not hear them.* Oh dear Sinner! What a terrible menace is this to a poor Soul, to be forſaken at the laſt, and caſt off by Almighty God.

But he has Eyes and will not ſee, Ears and will not hear, Feet and will not walk. He has affectedly lulled his Conſcience aſleep with the drunkenneſs of his ſins, the Trumpet of Death and Judgment cannot rouze him; and he intends to awake at his death, and live to heaven, who living was dead to Grace. Would you know what becomes of him? A Meſſage is diſpatch'd, for Mercy has given him over, and Juſtice will no

no longer indure him; perchance the ſame that was brought to King *Ezechias* on his Sick-bed. *Diſpone domui tuæ, quia morieris tu & non vives. Take order with thy houſe, for thou ſhalt die, and ſhalt not live, Iſa. ch. 38. v. 1.* A diſtemper ſeiſes him, he is carried to his Bed, his affrighted Friends run to his aid, with weeping Eyes they beg of him *Now*, for *Now* is the time, or *Never*, to think on his Soul, to repent and reconcile himſelf to God, they mind him with moſt earneſt intreaties, of his ſo often repeated promiſes, *I will, I will, when I come to dye.* And what does this deluded Soul anſwer? Thanks be to God he is not ſo ill as to think himſelf at that point, in that extremity as they Imagin, who wou'd have him die before his time, or modeſtly to hinder them from repeating what he would not hear, he gives his Friends many thanks in very obliging terms, and ſays he will do it ſpeedily as ſoon as the dulneſs of his head clears up, the pain at his heart relents, which at preſent hinder him from performing any thing, with the ſeriouſneſs a buſineſs of that importance requires. Jeſus! As he ſpoke he fell out of his Senſes, he has loſt his ſpeech, his eyes are ſet in his head, he breaths no more, he is dead. A puniſhment juſtly due to the merits of his Crime, that he who living never raiſed his Eyes to Heaven to deſire it, dying ſhould not caſt them down on hell to fear it, who living never thought on God, dying ſhould forget himſelf. I am ſorry I can't comfort his ſad and afflicted Friends with a *Requieſcat in pace. The Lords peace be with him.* The Antiphon that I wou'd have Sung before and after every Funeral Pſalm, ſhou'd be that moſt true Sentence of St. *Aug. It is the puniſhment of every ſinner, that he forget himſelf when he comes to dye, who whilſt he lived was forgetful of God.*

Chriſtian Auditory. You are all created to eternal happineſs, all born to Immortal Glory, and conſequently you have all Souls to ſave. But *qui fecit te ſine te*, ſays St. *Aug. non ſalvabit te ſine te. He that made you without you, will not ſave you without you.* Your concurrance with the grace and calls of Almighty God, is of neceſſity to Salvation. If you have been ever called and neglected it, how do you know you ſhall ever

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be called again. If you have not been yet called, perchance the first is the last. You have seen what sad and lamentable ends have attended the Delayers. I have shewn the stubborn Sinner how difficult a thing it is to do Pennance in the last hour, and laid down the reason too, of the sad *Exit* of one of thy Companions. And will nothing move thee? Will nothing mollify thy strong heart? Come along with me to the Throne of Mercy. If I can't convince thee, I le try at least if I can confound thee. Let's go to Mount *Calvary*. With your leave Blessed Virgin, room Courteous Souldiers Devout *Magdalen* you have heard already an all-pardoning *Remittuntur tibi*, &c. *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. Cast up thy Eyes then, O Sinner, and look if thou canst for shame. It is thy God that thought himself miserable unless thou wert happy; who after three and thirty years Preaching, Sweat, and Labour for thy sake, died that thou mayest live eternally. He is naked to cloath thee with the Robes of Immortality. He bows his Sacred head to give thee a kiss of Peace, he stretcheth forth his arms to embrace thee, he has his side pierced to open thee a passage to his heart to shew he loves thee; he is crowned with Thorns to Crown thee with a Diadem of Immortal Glory. Those Wounds from Head to Foot are thy Sins. He has made a Bath of his pretious blood to heal them. Those wounds are so many tokens of his bleeding love. Those wounds are so many eloquent mouths that cry to thy stony heart, *repentance*, *repentance*. But I have something more to say, for thy God does yet more. He has written thee with wounds in his hands, for he cannot forget thee, with these he pleads thy cause in Heaven to his eternal Father. I hear the holy Spirit with unspeakable groans cry out for Mercy. And does not this melt thee into Sorrow and Compassion? Art thou not yet a Penitent? I leave thee then to plead thy own cause at the most severe Tribunal of Divine Justice. But you, O Father of Mercies, by the bitter death and passion of your most blessed Son, grant that so sad and lamentable an end may never happen to any one here. *In nomine Patris*, &c. *Amen*.

Ipse autem vulneratus est propter scelera nostra, Isa. 53. 5.

FINIS.